

2

X

1507/1334



**SELF-INCONSISTENCY  
EXEMPLIFIED;**

**WHEREIN THE  
BURGHER'S OPPOSITION  
TO THEIR OWN  
PROFESSION OF RELIGION**

**IS**

**DEMONSTRATED**

**By ROBERT SMITH**



SELF-DEFENCE



EXHIBITED:

WHEREIN THE

DURABLE OPPOSITION

TO THEIR OWN

DESTRUCTION OF RELIGION

IS

DEMONSTRATED

BY ROBERT SMITH



# SELF-INCONSISTENCY

EXEMPLIFIED:

WHEREIN THE  
BURGHER'S OPPOSITION

TO THEIR OWN  
PROFESSION OF RELIGION

IS  
DEMONSTRATED.

---

BY ROBERT SMITH.

---

MARK xiv. 36. — *Their Witness agreed not together.*

TITUS iii. 10, 11. *A man that is an Heretick, — sinneth,  
being condemned of HIMSELF.*

GLASGOW:

Printed for the AUTHOR, and Sold by the  
Booksellers in TOWN and COUNTRY.

M,DCC,LXXVIII:

SENIOR COLLEGE



EXEMPTED

WHEREIN THE

BURGHES'S OPPOSITION

TO THE LONDON

PROFESSION OF RELIGION

IS

DEMONSTRATED

---

By ROBERT SMITH.

---

Printed by J. G. Smith, at the University Press, London.

CLASSICAL

Printed for the Author, and Sold by the  
Booksellers in Town and Country.

MDCCLXXIII

**T**HE subject considered in the following pages has been already explained at large by the Associate Synod, and members thereof, as all may know. Therefore a minute examination of the several particular concernments of the controversy is not here attempted. I have only offered some thoughts upon the merits of the cause in general, referring the reader to the foresaid writings for his information in, and a vindication of the several steps which the Synod has taken relative to the matter of debate.

AMONG these writings, I would recommend that piece particularly, intitled, "The Present Truth: a Display of the Secession-Testimony." There a particular account is given of that dispute, which I should think must carry conviction into the mind, unless it be stupified either with ignorance, indifferency, or prejudice.

LET none imagine that the swearing of the disputed oath is a matter not to be counted upon, as gospel doctrine is taught by the friends of that oath. This is the case with many; they think it little concerns them what the Burghers hold concerning the burghers oath, while they preach Bible truths. But these persons should know that the Burghers, their preaching gospel doctrines will be of little avail for recommending them to such as properly consider the Bible. Their preaching gospel doctrines is the only thing which recommends them to

to the most part of their followers who have any concern about religion. Yet this, I say, is a very uncertain recommendation. Persons have taught a number of undoubted truths; and as yet all had the wrath of God burning hot against them on account of their teaching. This we find to have been the case with Job's three friends, Job xlii. 7, 8. Whoever examines the discourses of these men in the preceding part of that book will find many valuable doctrines, considered by themselves,—Doctrines none will except against if they are not deists. Yet the Lord makes a very awful declaration concerning them, and passes sentence upon them, condemning their teaching,—wherein many truths were taught,—“The Lord said to Eliphaz,—My wrath  
 “s kindled against thee, and against thy two  
 “friends; for ye have not spoken of me (without the supplement) right, as my servant Job. There-  
 “fore take unto you seven bullocks, and seven  
 “rams and go to my servant Job, and offer up  
 “for yourselves a burnt-offering, and my servant  
 “Job, shall pray for you.” The Lord here expresses his anger against these men and condemns them FOR THEIR TEACHING;—teaching, wherein many important truths were declared. The matter of their teaching, considered by itself, was, for the most part, all right. But the particular design of it made it all wrong. All their doctrine, all their discourse was in the way of injuring the character of Job. This was a dead fly which made their ointment “send forth a stinking favour.” Just so in the present case; a number of precious doctrines, we doubt not, are taught by the Burghers. And it is equally certain that all that teaching is in the way of defending a sinful swearing. I say, all their preaching is in support of a sin-





sinful swearing. Must not then these preachings be of the same sort with the forementioned speeches? Though particular doctrines which they preach, are true considered in themselves, yet taking the matter complexely, that is, one piece with another, their teaching is not right. Eliphaz and his two friends could never be upon a footing to speak of the things of God right, until they made satisfaction for their wrong speaking, and vindicated the character they had injured. Neither will the Burghers ever be upon a footing to preach RIGHT, until they make satisfaction for their offence, and vindicate that act of Synod which they have condemned. Let none say, Why should such notice be taken of acts of Synod? The observing of such acts is a matter of Christ's particular enjoining. Our Lord Christ sent an epistle to a church in a very extraordinary and solemn manner. He made such a representation of his glory in way of vision, unto the man by whom he sent it, that he fell down as dead, so very great was the weight of that glory.—The only particular injunction which he therein laid upon *that* church was, that she should observe a certain ACT of Synod. Rev. ii. 24, 25. "But unto you I say, and "unto the rest in Thyatira, as many, as have not "known the depths of Satan, as they speak, I will "lay upon you none other burden, but that "which ye have, hold fast till I come." The burden which they had relative to Jezebel's doctrine was an act of Synod, of which see, Acts xv. 28, 29. Their holding fast this act was what Christ enjoin'd upon this church. And this was the only particular injunction which he laid upon her. The swearing condemned by the Associate Synod is as really offensive to many professors of religion as

the eating was condemned by the Synod of Jerusalem. Christ says, Hold fast that act concerning that oath. Thus one may see that the observing acts of the church is a weighty matter. The pressing this was the principal design of the foresaid epistle to the church of Thyatira. Let then the voice of Christ be attended unto, in the controversy. "That which ye have, hold fast till I come,  
 "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my  
 "WORKS (done by my church) unto the end,  
 "to him will I give power over the nations :—  
 "even as I received of my Father.

**SELF.**

## SELF-INCONSISTENCY

### EXEMPLIFIED, &c.

**T**HE importance of believing with the heart is acknowledged by all who profess christianity, and the interesting nature of confessing with the mouth, must be owned by all who have any proper acquaintance with the Bible. The holding fast the profession of the faith, stands on the front of the duties required of the church. As access with boldness into the holiest by the blood of Jesus is her great PRIVILEGE so the holding fast the profession of the faith is her great DUTY\*. The very great struggle that has taken place about that profession is also no small evidence of its weight. A struggle which has obtain'd in all christian lands and in all ages. As it has been the object of vigorous contending in the days of our fathers, who does not see it a matter warmly disputed for in our day? How many are the parties just now upon the field! How are professors of religion crumbled into parties! Whence so many denominations of professors, if it is not from a striving about and for the profession of religion? The Protestants had surely a quarrel with Rome's profession. The like is the case with any who secede from any church.

\* Heb. x. 23.

About 40 years ago, a number seceded from the established church in Scotland. They had a quarrel with the profession which that church was making, otherwise their secession had been altogether without cause. The seceding ministers came in process of time to be erected into a judicature, bearing the designation of the Associate Synod.

About 30 years ago, it was a question in said Synod, Whether it was lawful for seceders to swear the religious clause in some burghers oaths. The Synod condemning the swearing that clause, a few members protested against that decision. These protesters being joined and supported by some others separated from the synod. Thus a rupture took place.

This matter has been the subject of a great deal of reasoning, not only when lying before the synod, but also since judgment was given upon it. The pens of ministers on both sides, and others have occupied, and the tongues of many more have been employed in that controversy. The dispute is all about the PROFESSION of religion as the words of that clause evidence, *viz.*—I protest, before God and your lordships, that I profess and allow with my heart, the true religion presently professed within this realm, and authorized by the laws thereof; I shall abide thereat, and defend the same to my life's end, renouncing the Roman religion called Papistry. The controversy must be of the greatest consequence, whatever may be said of the reasoning of the disputants; being a controversy wherein that very important matter, even the PROFESSION of religion is so nearly concerned. What should we account a matter of weight, if we do not reckon this a matter of this sort? Is

not



not the profession of religion, that is the account which one makes of the mind and will of God, before the world one of the most solemn things wherein he can engage?

The burgher party plead, that it is not any profession of religion which is sworn to in the above clause. They plead that it is sinful to swear to any profession. It is religion ITSELF, which may be sworn to, say they, See Mr Erskine's Fancy no Faith, p. 35. Mr Hall's Impartial Survey, p. 11, 105, and Mr Brown's History of the Secession, p. 15, 16. The last two give out their party to hold that the PROFESSION of religion is no part of the oath.

This is the way they take to persuade people of of the safety of the foresaid clause. It is not any profession of the true religion, but the true religion ITSELF which is professed, say they, which is sworn in that clause. In this assertion lies their defence, But how do they prove it? Why, it is sinful to swear to any profession.

It was thought that our reformers gave prelacy a shock by their public covenanting; and it may well be said, that the solemn league and covenant of the three nations has a blow struck at its root by the above burgher pleading, If it is sinful to a profession of religion undoubtedly that covenant deserved burning and burying, being a sinful oath. In that oath the covenanters swore adherence, not immediately to religion ITSELF, but to religion in a certain profession of it. In the first paragraph of that covenant they swore. "They  
"would sincerely really, and constantly by the  
"grace of God endeavour in their several places  
"and callings the preservation of the REFORMED  
"religion in THE CHURCH OF SCOT-  
"LAND,

"LAND, and the reformation of religion in  
"England and Ireland.

These covenanting Noblemen, Gentlemen, Ministers of the Gospel, &c. engaged immediately, not to religion in itself, but to religion in that PROFESSION which was made of it by the church of Scotland. I say, they engaged immediately, not to religion in itself, but to religion in a certain profession of it. My reason for saying so is obvious from the words of that covenant. It is the REFORMED religion,—the reformed religion of the CHURCH of SCOTLAND, they swore unto. Now was the religion of Jesus ever reformed, considered as in itself? If it might be reformed, no man nor yet any angel might be the reformer. — Further, the religion they swore unto, was what they spoke of as in the church of SCOTLAND, in distinction from these in England and Ireland. But was religion ITSELF peculiar to SCOTLAND? No, it was certainly the privilege of the other two nations also; otherwise they looked upon them as heathens. By religion then they understood religion in a certain profession of it, which they reckoned a proper one. Moreover, the religion in this oath was what they proposed to REFORM in England and Ireland. "We will, (say they,) endeavour the REFORMATION of religion in England and Ireland." As already said, what man, what angel might propose the work, if we are to understand it as considered in itself! If these covenanters who swore to reform religion in England and Ireland, meant religion ITSELF, never did any go beyond them, or even come up with them in blasphemy. But it is past all question that they meant religion in respect of the profession of it. It is lawful and particularly needful to set about

about the reforming the profession which many churches make of religion. But it is shockingly nameless impiety to propose to reform religion itself. Thus it appears that however our national vows, particularly the solemn league and covenant, struck at prelacy, our burgher scheme strikes no less at that covenanting. Ahaz † removed the brazen altar which was before the Lord; to make way for the altar of Damascus. Our burghers have pulled down the solemn league and covenant that the burghers oath may be built up. Let it be remembred what is their defence in approving that oath, even this already noticed, namely, That the PROFESSION of religion is no part of the oath, it being sinful to swear to any PROFESSION.

How can these people pretend that they own the binding obligation of these covenants upon posterity, when they talk at such a rate? For my part, I would never reflect upon these who burnt these solemn vows, if I counted it wrong to make the profession of religion a matter of oath; for it did belong to the matter of these vows, as has been just now made to appear. It seems to me that either the burghers do not understand what they say on their cause, or they are not hearty friends to our solemn covenants.

Moreover, according to their foresaid pleading, the ordination-vows of all presbyterian ministers, their own not excepted, must be sinful. The Westminster Confession of Faith is a part of these vows; and with themselves, the Judicial Act and Testimony emitted by the Associate Presbytery, is a part thereof also. Now is either that Confession or that testimony the true religion itself; or, a PRO-



FESSION thereof? If any be pleased to say, They are the true religion ITSELF, I am sure they are not burghers, because they have found the last of these polluted with a number of MISTAKES and ERRORS. Most certainly both Confession and Testimony are given out only as human appearances for religion, in the matter of the profession of it.

How will the burghers answer for their conduct in administrating and swearing from year to year a sinful oath. This is done in their ordaining ministers and elders. I say, A SINFUL oath, according to their foresaid pleading.

They have charged the synod (indeed very injudiciously,) with throwing an odium upon honest burgeses, by condemning the above oath. But whom and what have they condemned in defending it?—All our honest, our zealous, our faithful covenanting ancestors; and I may say all the illustrious list of martyrs in the last period of cruel butchery and bloody persecution:—All the judicious honest godly ministers and elders in the church of Christ in Scotland since the reformation, &c. If they say, the synod has condemned these burgeses, may it not be replied, Who condemned all these? The burghers have done so in their writings, but may be that they have not done so in their minds. Possibly they did not consider their reasoning before they published it. The best have been guilty of speaking, and may we not also say of writing unadvisedly. But let it also be remembered that such mistakes shou'd be speedily corrected.

From what has been observed, it appears to be to no purpose to insist upon the words, TRUE RELIGION, in the disputed clause. It is not religion in ITSELF, but in the PROFESSION of it which is meant



meant by that phrase. These are vastly distinct things. The true religion itself is the mind and will of God, which is declared to us by the scriptures. The PROFESSION of the true religion is that account which a person or people make thereof before the world. Now can any magistrate in Scotland be thought to mean by the true religion in that clause, religion ITSELF? If he does, then his calling one to swear it, means no more but his owning, upon oath, the will of God. Any may swear that clause, save the Papists. Deists themselves may do so. The will of God is revealed in the scriptures which deists deny; yet the deist may swear this clause in a full consistency with his deism. He pleads his owning the true religion, though he refuses the scriptures are the word of God. Some may say, If he owns the true religion, he must also own the scriptures as they make it known. *Ans.* We indeed affirm the scriptures only make known the will of God towards us, but the disputed clause does not say so, what then is to hinder these which deny it, to swear this clause? They own there is a true religion; but say, the light of nature makes it known; thus they may swear that clause consistently with their deism.

I say, then, if religion in itself only is sworn in that clause, the man only swears that he owns the will of God by whom he swears. Thus the solemn work of swearing is awfully prophaned by both the imposer and the jurant. The man swears what is presupposed to his swearing. The magistrate in requiring him to swear, considers him as owning the will of God yet he requires him to swear that he does own that will.

That of the jurant's owning the will of the God by whom he swears, is settled and over with the magistrate

gistrate before he admits him to swear, yet, according to the burghers account of the true religion sworn, when the magistrate comes to the solemn act of putting, and the swearer to the like act of taking the oath, what comes forth, as what must be sworn? the jurant's owning the will of God! Would it not be awful work in a magistrate to require one to swear by God that he owns the being of God! Well it is work of the like sort to require one to swear that he owns the will of God by whom he swears. Yet this is all that swearing of the religious clause of some burges's oaths according to the burghers their above explication of it.

Thus it appears that it is, that it must be religion in a certain profession of it which is meant by the TRUE RELIGION, which is sworn in the foresaid clause.

The question, then, in this controversy is not. Whether it is lawful and agreeable to the word of God to profess the true religion? Nor is it, whether the true religion is professed in the realm? It is readily granted that the true religion is in some sense professed in England, where prelacy is authorised. For if this was not so, England behoved to be considered by us as a part of the heathen world. Who will say that it is not professed at Rome where popery is established? Yet who will say that a true presbyterian may swear the religion professed and authorised either in Spain or England? But the question is, whether there is a such a faithful, witnessing scriptural profession of religion made by this realm, and authorised by the laws thereof as may be adopted by oath?—It is this profession which is sworn in the foresaid religious clause of some burges's oaths. It is the National Profession which was authorised at the Revolution 1690, so far

as that settlement continues in force to this present time. Is that profession a faithful one; such as a Seceder, a Witness for a Covenanted Reformation may say with the solemnity of an oath, that he professes and allows it with his heart? No, it is an apostate and perfidious profession, instead of being a faithful, witnessing one.

It may be said, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Presbyterian Form of Church-government are authorised by the laws of the land, True; they are so. Yet by reason of the way this is done, it is only an apostate and perfidious profession which is authorised. Compare the way in which they were authorised in 1649, with the way in which they are authorised at present, and this will be evident. The way in which they were professed and authorised then you have in an act of parliament 1649, bound up with said Confession and Form of Church-government. They were authorised by parliament as they were received by the church. How they were received by the church is declared in her acts wherein she adopted them. Her act adopting that Confession is dated, at Edinburgh, 27th August, 1647. This act is also bound up with said Confession.

The way wherein it is authorised at present, you have in the act of parliament in 1690, intitled, "Act ratifying the Confession of Faith, and settling Presbyterian Church-government." How dismal is the profession made and authorised at the Revolution in 1690, compared with that which was authorised in 1649? Let the forementioned acts be considered, and it will be found that they are vastly different professions. It may indeed be said, that the same Confession of Faith is approved in both; yet they do not authorise the same profession  
of



of religion. The presbyterians and the prelatists own the same Bible; yet they do not make the same profession.

As already said, the parliament in 1649 ratified the Confession composed at Westminster, as it was received by the Assembly of the church of Scotland in 1647, see the act of parliament itself. Now how did that Assembly receive it? read their act. Copies of that act being so very common, there is the less need for transcribing it. Some things in it may be here observed.

1<sup>st</sup>, The Assembly's taking notice of, and approving it by an act, was in consequence of their entering into a covenant with God, and a league with England and Ireland, and by reason of the vows they had come under to both God and England and Ireland. This the Assembly in the beginning of their act, particularly observe and acknowledge. "A Confession of Faith (say they) for the  
"kirks of God in the three kingdoms, being the  
"chiefest part of that uniformity in religion, WHICH  
"BY THE SOLEMN LEAGUE AND COVENANT  
"WE ARE BOUND TO ENDEAVOUR, &c." Here they PROFESS their being under v<sup>o</sup>ws to God to England and Ireland as to this Confession—Now, Is there any hint of this, any PROFESSION of this in the Revolution—ratification of that Confession? Is it therein owned and professed, that Scotland is under covenant obligations to God,—to England and Ireland, to take that notice of that Confession? All that the parliament 1690 speaks of as leading to a ratifying it, is their reading, voting, and approving it. There is no word of being under any solemn vows about it. May it not be appealed to the unbiaſſed, if there be not a vastly different



PROFESSION of religion in the one authorising, from what there is in the other.

2dly, The assembly received it as a standard of UNIFORMITY with CHURCHES, viz. these of England and Ireland. They say,—"It being so necessary, and so much longed for, that the said Confession be with all possible expedition approved and established in both kingdoms as a principal part of the intended UNIFORMITY in religion.—The General Assembly doth therefore agree unto, and approve the said Confession, as to the point of UNIFORMITY, agreeing for our part, that it be a common Confession for the three kingdoms."

In the Revolution settlement of it, it is only received and ratified as a standard of SOUNDNESS in the faith as to the church of Scotland: As the Act of Settlement witnesseth. The immediate and primary design and end of Scotland's receiving that Confession, is in the present settlement of it altogether and entirely passed by. There is no professing England's concern herewith; nor yet Scotland's design and end in adopting it, which end it had engaged by covenant to pursue. At the Revolution, in the then ratification of said Confession, the nation dropt pursuing that end by that Confession which it had by solemn engagements to God, to men, bound itself to prosecute, even the said UNIFORMITY. The National Profession as to that Confession now, is, to preserve soundness in the church of Scotland. Whereas in the other settlement,—it was to promote UNIFORMITY in religion in the churches of Scotland, England, and Ireland. Is not this apostacy and perjury? This Confession was professed by Scotland as the Confession of the three kingdoms, but now only as the Con-

Confession of one. Scotland hereby has left the apostate nations to continue in their apostacy; and thus is become apostate for its own part also. England has cast off this part of its covenanted uniformity with Scotland. Well Scotland, equally covenanted Scotland says, "Let no words be about that uniformity itself in our professing what was a part of it. England has renounced it, and we will take no notice of it." The Revolution, the present National Profession, is this to Uniformity, as the cave of Machpelah was to Leah; of which Jacob said, *There I buried Leah*. Scotland may say as to the Revolution, the National Profession, *There I buried*, a Covenanted Uniformity in religion betwixt England, Ireland, and me.

3dly, The Assembly received it with an explication and limitation as to some things in it: namely, what concerns the office bearers in the church; and the magistrate's title to call the assemblies of church: as the act particularly specifies. All this is overlooked in the present profession. At the Revolution that Confession was approved as it lay in the thirty three chapters thereof. The magistrates power of calling these assemblies in the absolute, is accordingly a part of the National Profession, whereas in foresaid act the Assembly only grants it competent to the magistrate to do so in churches not constituted in point of government. By this means the king his yearly claiming the power of calling the General Assembly of the church of Scotland, is a part of the present National Profession. Here is erastianism.

From what has been observed, one may see the impertinency and weakness of one of the principal arguments used in behalf of the National Profession, or Revolution Settlement of religion.

The

The argument is this, The Westminster Confession, which was a part of the reformation in last century, is professed in the land and authorized by the laws thereof, therefore it must be owned that the reformation itself is professed and authorized also.

As to Scotland, her reformation in adopting that Confession, lay in the manner in which, and the end for which she did adopt it. This is self evident. As to the matter of that Confession, she had long before that time given forth a Confession thereof, namely, in 1560, &c. which is commonly called, The Scotch Confession. The advance then in reformation in her adopting the Westminster one lay in the manner in, and the end to which she received it. As formerly said, She received that Confession which came from England as joined in Covenant with England, having entered into a Solemn League with that people. In which Covenant and League, an endeavouring to bring the churches of the three kingdoms to the nearest conjunction and UNIFORMITY in religion was the leading article. The Confession being compiled for this end, she viewed herself as bound by covenant-ties to take notice of it, and accordingly she received it, as under solemn vows about the matter. But was there any thing of this manner, in ratifying that Confession at the Revolution? In the National professing of it, is there any thing like a saying, As to this, thy vows are upon us, O God?

The end to which Scotland received that confession was, that the same Confession might be in ALL THE THREE CHURCHES; and not barely in any one of them, whether of Scotland, or any other:—that there might be UNIFORMITY in Confession of Faith in the three kingdoms, Scotland



received it to be a stone of witness unto that being so far attained which the covenanters in England as well as Scotland had engaged to endeavour. I say as a stone of witness hereunto ; some way like the stone which Joshua set up \*. It was set up as witness of uniformity having been so covenanted and also attained. In the Revolution Settlement, and National Profession all this is quite overlooked. There is no mention of solemn vows in the matter. The great reason and design of that Confession, is therein buried.

When Jacob came to Luz, he gave it another name † ; and from that time it was spoken of by that new name. When the Revolution Parliament ratified the Westminster Confession, they gave it a new name ; and in the National Profession it is spoken of by that name since. The name and title under which it was received by the church of Scotland in the year 1647, is still prefixed to the copies thereof, viz. " The CONFESSIO<sup>N</sup> of FAITH, agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines, sitting at Westminster, with the assistance of the Commissioners from the Church of Scotland, as a part (note carefully) of the Covenanted Uniformity in Religion betwixt the Churches of Christ in the three Kingdoms."

Is it spoken of under that name in the Revolution Settlement ? Does it bear that title in the National Profession ? No ; it is evident to every person of understanding, that that Confession no more retains its reforming designation in the National Profession than Daniel retained his Hebrew name in Babylon. Its name in the National Profession, at most is, " The CONFESSIO<sup>N</sup> of FAITH,

\* Josh. xxiv. 26, 27. † Gen. xxviii. 19:

" voted



“voted and approved by (not the Church, but) Parliament of Scotland, as the Confession of this Church, containing the Sum of the Doctrine of the Reformed Churches.” This is the name of said Confession in the Revolution Settlement, as may be seen in the Act of Settlement. As Belshazzar suited Babylon, so this name and title of said Confession answers the said Settlement.

Thus it is evident, that the above argument in favours of the National Profession, though unweariedly repeated by the Burghers, is a very weak one.

It might be also observed, that if the National Profession retains the Westminster Confession to this day; the Jews retained that which was an ordinance of God, viz. the brazen serpent, to the days of Hezekiah. The brazen serpent was retained in the way of idolatry; the Westminster Confession is continued in the National Profession in the way of apostacy; yea, is there not reason to add, and of perjury?

Christ said to the Jews, *There is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust* †. So it may be said to these who in the above manner plead for the Revolution Settlement and the National Profession of religion, There is one thing that testifies against that Settlement and Profession of religion, even the Westminster Confession, of which ye boast.—In this Settlement the standard of uniformity is retained, and the uniformity is dropt. Now certainly the standard retained must be an evidence against such, because of the uniformity being dropt. Had the Jews, who refused Christ, made no account of the oracle concerning him, they had been

† John v. 45.

less inconsistent.—Had the Revolutioners, who made no account of our covenanted uniformity, taken no notice of the standard thereof, namely, the foresaid Confession, they had been less guilty of a glaring contempt of our reformation.

After all, why do the Burghers, for ascertaining the religion presently professed and authorized,—the religion sworn in the Burgess Oath, bring in that Confession? According to them, It is the DIVINE RELIGION ITSELF which is sworn. Now the Westminster Confession ITSELF is not the DIVINE RELIGION ITSELF. This is a bewildering of others, arising from a confusion of mind with themselves: on account of which they should have our compassion, and not be treated with any insulting derision.

It is not to be alledged that the Revolution Settlement of the Westminster Confession of Faith came to be found fault with only since the Burgess Oath came upon the carpet. It was quarrelled, not only when that oath was disputed in the Associate Synod; but even when the Marrow of Modern Divinity was a pannel at the bar of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. See for this, a Protest, dated at Edinburgh, May 21. 1722. A protest subscribed by a number of ministers; and among these we find Messrs Ebenezer and Ralph Erskines. In which protest they say, “ We  
 “ adhere to the standards of doctrine in this church;  
 “ to the Confession of Faith ratified in the parliament, *Anno* 1560, and to the National Covenant,  
 “ or Confession of Faith, both which we conceive  
 “ we are bound unto by the superadded tie of the  
 “ Solemn League and Covenant; as also, to the  
 “ Westminster Confession, with the larger and shorter Catechisms: and we are willing to subscribe  
 “ the

" the three Confessions aforesaid, as the Confessions of our Faith; and particularly the Westminster Confession as it was received by this church, *Anno 1647.*" They do not say, as it was received by this church, *Anno 1690.* These who lived in the year 1722. had without all doubt a reason for going so far back. They certainly were not pleased with the way that Confession was received in the year 1690, when they went the length of the year 1747. Had conscience, had faithfulness allowed them, it would have been more to their purpose to have offered to subscribe that Confession, as it was received in the year 1690, and professed in the year 1722. To the same purpose Mr. Ralph Erskine tell us, in his Appendix to his book intituled, *Fancy no Faith*, pag. 31. That when the Synod of Fife required of their members a new subscription of the Confession of Faith, he with other four " unanimously refused, declaring at the same time (says he) our readiness to adhere to, and renew our subscription of the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, as they were received by the Church of Scotland, *Anno 1647.*"

The Burgher ministers have repeatedly said, That it was by a light of later date than the judicial Act and Testimony that the Antiburgher ministers (as they are called) came to condemn the Revolution Settlement. But, from what has been just now noticed, it is evident that it was not so with some of the Burghers, viz. Messrs Ebenezer and Ralph Erskines. They had light to condemn it in the year 1722. It is a pity that some should have forgot the discovery of their own light, in the very scornful way they have spoke of the light of others.

Not



Not only did they express themselves as already related, but besides all the testimony they gave against the foresaid settlement of religion at the Revolution when they acceded to the Act, Declaration and Testimony emitted by the Associate Presbytery, they come in very express and strong terms to find fault with and testify against that settlement in an Act for a Fast, dated at Dunfermline, Jan. 8th, 1741. In which act it is said, "The Presbytery—considering that a righteous and holy God "is—threatening us with a bloody sword to avenge "the quarrel of his covenant, and hath visited us "with a variety of judgments, the just fruit of our " manifold sins and provocations,—such as—the " **SINFUL BURYING OF THE REFORMING PERIOD** " **in the REVOLUTION SETTLEMENT.**" Among the members of Presbytery which formed that act were Messrs Ebenezer and Ralph Erskines, James Fisher, &c. Do they not here make the Revolution Settlement the grave of the Reformation-work attained unto in the last reforming period? How lamentable is it that good and great men should be found promoting an approbation of that settlement, an approbation of it with all the solemnity of an oath! They have owned it to be the grave of the reforming period. Ah! that they should encourage persons to give their sanction to the burial; and to set to their seal, the seal of their oath to the deed. Paul bitterly lamented his consenting to the death of Stephen. And how necessary is it that the Burghers humbly confess their sad mistake in agreeing to and solemnly approving of the **BURIAL** of the Covenanted Reformation!

Considering the profession or account which was made of the Westminster Confession in the Revolution Settlement, which was acquiesced in without any



any complaint by the established church, may it not be affirmed, that said church, and all who approve of that settlement, whether burghers or others, have no right to the WESTMINSTER confession of faith ? As the apostle affirmed that those who served the tabernacle, had NO RIGHT to eat of the new testament altar † : so there is like reason for using the like language concerning the established church and the burghers as to said confession. It is not meant that it is not their duty to take up with it. All of them ought to do so ; and by our national vows are bound to adhere to it. It was the duty of all the Jews to come and partake of the altar the apostle speaks of, yet he affirms of a certain number of them as already noticed. Much so is it with the foresaid societies. They ought in point of duty to adhere to that confession of faith, but they have no right to it as theirs. They are not adhering to it: Paul says to the Galatians, " Whosoever of you are justified " by the law, ye are fallen from grace †." These now spoken of, approving the revolution-law establishing religion, are fallen from the Westminster confession of faith. The covenanted uniformity in religion betwixt the three kingdoms was buried in that settlement, now this confession is just a part of that uniformity. This is just what this confession is. This is the very formal nature of it, as the title of it witnesseth. The Assembly which composed it, agreed upon it as that. The church of Scotland received it as that. Now can they have any right to say they are adhering to a part of covenanted uniformity who have dropt that uniformity ITSELF ? Can they have any ground to plead

† Heb. xiii. 10.

† Chap. v. 4.

in such a manner ? Some may say, May not one profess the doctrines of that confession, though he does not profess that uniformity which it refers to ?

Persons may adhere to the doctrines of that confession without taking up with that uniformity. But the doctrines of that confession are one thing ; and the confession of these doctrines is another. The doctrines confessed, were long before the solemn league and covenant of the three nations were entered into ; but the Westminster confession of these doctrines, was what they covenanted to endeavour to bring about. Now, though the doctrines of that confession may be professed, without professing that uniformity, yet an adhering unto that CONFESSION of these doctrines cannot be without an appearing for it also. Let it not be thought that it is of little consequence whether the Westminster confession of these doctrines be professed or not, if the doctrines contain'd in it be professed. If the professing the Westminster confession be a trivial matter, so must, the professing the Westminster form of presbyterian church-government, the Westminster directory for public worship, the Westminster catechisms larger and shorter be a matter of no consequence. And what is the amount of this ? Just this ; the particular principal object of our reformers in their covenanting is not worthy of our professing. Thus the building raised up by covenanting is razed to the ground.

I therefore say, The established church and the burghers whatever adherence they may be making to the DOCTRINES of the Westminster confession, have given up with the WESTMINSTER CONFESSION of these doctrines. Hereby they lop off that solemn work of NATIONAL VOWING unto God

as a luxuriant branch in the exercise of the nation whether of Scotland or of England.

There is an objection which some may make against what has been said, which I had almost forgot, namely, this,

Persons professing the doctrines of a Confession, they certainly profess the Confession wherein they are held forth.

No; the church of Scotland professed the doctrines of the Westminster Confession BEFORE it had a being. But she could not profess also the Confession ITSELF. No body who is acquainted with the church of Scotland will refuse that she had reached to a professing the doctrines which she came to find in the Westminster Confession BEFORE that Confession came from London. But did she "say, What need is there for any of ACT of Assembly, for our ADHERING TO THAT CONFESSION? We have professed the DOCTRINES of it long ago, and still do: this is a sufficient adherence to that Confession." By no means, With great diligence and care, she passed an ACT for this purpose. It took a particular act to make that CONFESSION hers in 1647, who had for a long time been possessed of a profession of the DOCTRINES contained in it.

It might be highly useful, through the divine blessing, to persons, for bringing them to a proper and just view of this matter, to read and consider with particular care the act of the church of Scotland in 1645, approving and receiving the Westminster Directory for public worship. This was what was first agreed upon in the matter of the covenanted uniformity in religion. The Confession of Faith was agreed upon in the third place. And let it be remembered, That as to the Di-

D

rectory



rectory for worship,—the Form of Presbyterian Church-government,—the Confession of Faith,—and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, which were all compiled at Westminster, the key to understand them is the acts of the Assembly of the church of Scotland receiving them at Edinburgh.

However ill it fared with the Westminster Confession in the Revolution Settlement, Presbytery was no better used therein.

It was then so treated that every true Presbyterian, who is properly acquainted with the account (or profession) then made of it, must consider it as matter of bitter lamentation, instead of solemnly commending it. The account made of it in 1690, is a very apostate one compared with that in 1649. How is that account lessened, and that profession impaired? In 1649 it was professed as the government of the churches of Christ in the then three nations. In 1690 it is only professed as the government of this church, *viz.* of Scotland, as the Act of Settlement bears. In the reforming period, Scotland recommended to England this Form of Church-government in opposition to that base human invention, namely, Prelacy, which prevailed there. England came to take up with it so that it was professed there also. But it was not long when Prelacy was again submitted unto by that nation contrary to solemn vows. At the Revolution, Scotland only takes up with Presbytery for itself, taking no notice of England or Ireland in the matter. Presbytery's right to the government in the church of Christ in these nations was entirely given up in that Settlement. Scotland then and therein fell from all pleading Christ's right in this matter with England,—from all testifying to England their sin and duty in this matter. Is not this



this a profession stain'd with all the pollution of PERJURY? See the sixth Article of that Solemn League and Covenant entered into and sworn by Scotland. Is any more pretended in the Act of Settlement than that it be the government of the church IN THIS kingdom, namely, Scotland? Has the professing that it is the duty of our Southern Neighbours, yea of our Covenanted Brethren, to renounce that idol, Prelacy, which they now worship; and to take up with and subject themselves unto the Lord's ordinance of Presbyterial Church-government, any authority from that Settlement? Is there any such authority for witnessing to them that they are under the oath of God to do so:—that they ly under the guilt of open breach of vows while they do not? Does the said Settlement authorise professing of this sort?

In the matter of presbytery the parliament took a backsliding course, by reason of the way of their settling it. All regard to England, and Ireland was laid aside, though it was with a principal eye to them, the Westminster Form of Church government was received by Scotland in 1645.

Yea, the Revolution-parliament never pretended to authorise THAT Form of Government. What they pretended to authorise concerning church government, was ratified in 1592, as the act expressly declares, which was more than fifty years before the Westminster Form had a being. So very careful were our revolutioners to keep aloof from any countenancing, any adhering to, or appearing for our COVENANTED reformation, that they passed over that part of it relating to the government of the church, name and thing. It was not thought by them worthy to be named. Yet this Westminster Form was particularly prized by our reformers.

mers. Though possessed of that ratified in 1592, they ardently prayed and diligently laboured for that which came to be obtained in 1645, and was by them received with joy. The Assembly in this act receiving it, say, They were MOST ARDENT AND MOST SOLICITOUS about it. The divine ordinance of presbytery was buried by several acts of parliament between the restoration of Charles the II. and the revolution. And then a stone was put to the mouth of the grave. I say, The divinity of that ordinance was therein evidently struck at. The glory of the government of David's house, which had reached unto all the twelve tribes of Israel, was much darkened when it came to be owned only as to two of them. Is not the divinity of presbytery awfully struck at in this settlement, which had been solemnly profess'd as the government of the church of Christ in the three nations, but herein is profess'd as to only one of them, namely Scotland.

Jephtha's principle of possessing that which the Lord his God had given him to possess † was certainly quite wrong, if the revolution-profession of presbytery be right. In this profession, there is not a word more about presbytery having any right to the government in the churches in England or Ireland; than there's about the Pretender having a right to the crown of Britain.

But not only was there a stone thus put to the mouth of this grave at the revolution; but it was, at the union of the two nations in 1707, sealed. The parliament of Scotland then SEALED THE STONE. Let it be carefully noticed what profession of religion was authorised in the Union

† Judg. xi. 24.

Settlement. It is more immediately and so more properly the religion, that is, the profession of religion, which was authoris'd at the union, than that at the revolution, which is sworn in the burgess oath. It is the religion PRESENTLY authoris'd. Now it is the PRESENT laws, these PRESENTLY in force which PRESENTLY authorise. The Revolution Settlement annulled every foregoing settlement so far as inconsistent with it, so it is with that at the union as to all preceeding it: as is expressly declared in the last article of it.

This is well known, that in this union, the maintenance of Prelacy in England is expressly agreed to by the parliament of Scotland as a fundamental article of the union with England. That parliament, the members of which swore in 1649, to endeavour the EXTIRPATION of Prelacy out of England, and the maintaining what reformation had been attained there; that parliament, I say, solemnly consented in 1707, to the MAINTAINANCE of Prelacy in England. At the union the Scotch parliament ended; then it died. David when dying, left it in charge upon Solomon, to build the Lord's house\*. But that parliament died with a charge to Scotland, not to build it, at least in England. Many of our Scotch Worthies died under prelatic-fury, died at stakes, upon gibbets, testifying against Prelacy: but that parliament died with a solemn consent to it. A judge of Israel said, *Let me die*†. His death reached the idolatry in Palestine a heavy blow. The Scotch parliament said at the union, "Let me die?" And then they gave their sanction to Prelacy in England. Yea, as the articles of that union bear, they put Scot-

\* 1 Chron. xxviii. 20. † Judg. xvi. 30.



land under a tribute to Prelacy for all time coming. All who shou'd hence forth be admitted to be members of parliament are bound by solemn oath to maintain Prelacy in England. This that parliament consented unto, and imposed upon Scotland. A burthen neither our fathers, nor we are able to bear. Thus our Scotch parliament died: thus Prelacy lives and reigns. Was not the stone herein sealed?

Is not the NATIONAL PROFESSION, — the profession PRESENTLY AUTHORIZED by law, an apostate and perfidious one?

In this profession, all that the church did for the honour of Christ; yea all that Christ did for the interest of the church in last reformatory period, passes for nothing. There is in this profession no saying, The Lord liveth, who wrought that deliverance for his church, and reformation in her betwixt 1638 and 1650. It is reckoned sufficient, if it is said, The Lord liveth, who brought his work to that length it was come in 1592.

But how will this answer to Jer. xxiii. 7, 8. *The days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no more say, The Lord liveth, which brought up the children out of the land Egypt. But they shall say, the Lord liveth, which brought up, and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all the countries whether I had driven them.* Here it appears, that our National Profession is ANTISCRIP-  
TURAL, however much scripture, and however many good things are in it. There is not in it a saying, The Lord liveth, which brought us out of the land of the NORTH; though it may be pled, There is a saying, The Lord liveth which brought us up out of Egypt. I readily own that it some way



way says, The Lord liveth, which brought us to that reformation in 1592: but as expressly deny that it says, The Lord liveth, which brought us to that reformation betwixt 1638 and 1649.

Now, these in Nehemiah's day, lived in a period too far advanced, to profess the bringing Israel from Egypt, without professing also the bringing that people from the land of the north. It might have suited those in Moses day, but not those of Nehemiah's. Those who lived in the reign of James the sixth might rest some way in the profession made of religion in 1592; but those in the reign of king George the third are come nearer the period when the mystery of God shall be finished, than that they may from thence take the measures of their profession. Yet this is the very profession which the swearer of the foresaid religious clause so solemnly declares he professes, and allows with his heart.

This is the object that oath binds unto,—the oath which the burghers have set themselves to defend. How strong, how shocking a contrast does their appearance make! They profess to testify against the established church, and to be in a state of secession from her on account of her defection from our covenanted reformation. Yet they themselves approve of a profession of religion which quite overlooks that reformation. Strange to leave a church for not adhering to that work, and at the same time declare with an oath that they allow with their heart a profession wherein the very same work is buried. Why flee from an anti-reformation church, and cleave to an anti-reformation profession?

They say, they have seceded from the national church, because she has dropt reformation principles,

ciples, and they have separated from the associate synod that they may maintain an anti reformation profession, viz. the profession authorized by law.

Thus they put one in mind of Jehu, who in his opposition to Baal seem'd a reformer, but still in his own system was an idolater. The burghers appear zealous in their opposition to a corrupt church; but in their own profession are apostates.

The charge is evidently heavy, and by a little reflection it will be found to be certainly just.

They are in a state of secession from the national church, and in a state of separation from the associate synod, as already said. How did they set their separation on foot? It was by protesting against a sentence of Synod, forbidding and discharging seceders to swear the religious clause of some burghers oaths. The clause has been already repeated. Hereupon they separated from the synod: and strenuously vindicate that swearing which the synod has condemned. Now we have proven that the national profession is sworn to in that clause: as also that profession is an apostate one. Must they not then be apostates?

They have set themselves in particular to vindicate and maintain that swearing. They had no other quarrel with the synod besides the condemning that oath. They not only vindicate that oath among other things: but they are set for so doing in particular. Seceders not only hold the christian people's right to choose their own pastors, among other principles, but it is one of their characteristic principles in particular. Well, so it is as to the burghers and this oath. Their Synod,—Presbytries, &c. are all to THIS OATH, as the priests of Jeroboam were to the high places, of whom it

is said, *That they were priests of the high PLACES* \*. Will they themselves not own, that in distinction from the judicatures of the national church, theirs are the synod of the Secession &c. well, as to the synod they protested against and separated from they are the BURGHER synod, or synod of the *Burgefs Oath*. Their distinguished, (or characteristical) principle is, the lawfulness of the burgesfs oath. To this they have dedicated an offering which the price of the creation could not purchase, even *Gospel Ordinances*. Thus is that awful oath honoured.

Let it be remembred and carefully considered, That the DISTINGUISHING principle of any society is that in behalf and support of which all gospel ordinances are dispensed by and among that society.

This is glaringly evident — Is not all the administration of ordinances in the church of Rome in support of Popery, the distinguishing principle of that society? Is not their preaching so? Is it not so when they preach the divinity of Christ as really as when they hold forth the infallibility of his pretended vicar? Is the Popish priest become a Protestant when he teaches the doctrine of the Trinity; The same is the case with respect to the church of England, &c &c. And it must be so with regard to every society, and its distinguishing principle. The consequence of all this is, that all the administration of gospel ordinances among the Burghers is in support of the burgesfs oath. Strange singular ministry! Their public worship has this, among other things, inscribed upon it, The lawfulness of the *Burgefs Oath*. Paul tells that as he

\* 1 Kings xii. 32.



was observing the devotions of the Athenians, he found an altar with this inscription, *To the unknown GOD*. In many places now an altar is to be found with this inscription, *For the Burgeſſ Oath*.

It was ſaid, that the diſtinguiſhing principle of a ſociety is a matter vaſtly important. This is alſo undeniable. Is not the inſcription which a ſociety writes upon the worſhip they publicly give unto God a matter weighty? Is not Popery held ſacred at Rome? Is not Prelacy conſidered in the ſame light in the church of England?

There is indeed ſomething very odd and as abſurd told us of the Burghers concerning them and their inſcription. It is told us by theſe of their own ſociety, that they ALLOW, they GRANT a LICENCE to perſons to think of the Burgeſſ Oath, as they pleaſe. Mr Brown in his foreſaid hiſtory, p. 68. ſays, "The Burghers ABHOR making either the approbation or condemnation of that clauſe (of the burgeſſ oath,) a direct or indirect term of church fellowſhip with them: him that is weak, or different from them in his faith about this point they chearfully admit, even to the miniſtry." Mr Hall in his preface to his Survey, p. 22. ſays, "The Burghers deſire, (thoſe who approve the burgeſſ oath) none of their members, miniſters, or people, to approve the burgeſſ oath. Every one is at liberty to think about it for himſelf."

The Burghers abhorrence is a ſtrange ſort of it. Did ever any other ſociety abhor after this kind. Did ever the Papiſts abhor the conſidering a joining with them as an approbation of Popery? Did ever the Proteſtants abhor ſo as to perſons joining them? Did they ever ſay, We abhor the looking upon

upon persons doing so as to any approbation of the protestant cause. Yet thus the Burghers abhor as to the burghers oath. It would seem from this heart frame concerning it, that they have no heart love to it, whatever necessity they may be under of being advocates for it. They profess to be Seceders as well as Burghers. May they not say, "We abhor a joining us being viewed as any "approbation of the Seceſſion." Not only do they so ahhor, but "they CHEERFULLY admit "even to the ministry" these who are different from them in their faith about that oath. They admit these who in their judgment condemn that oath; so join in the Synod's sentence concerning it, and condemn the Burghers protesting against that sentence. Why admit such men to the ministry and refuse the Synod's sentence? Strange ministry! a ministry that approves and a ministry that condemns a part of the very inscription they have wrote upon all the public worship they perform, As one speaking on the burgher cause justly observes, "Here is absurdity peeping over the "head of absurdity." What sort of ministry must these among them be, who disapprove that oath? and possibly Mr Brown is one of them. Their people are engaged and engaging in that oath, yet these ministers give no testimony or warning against it. Can they be reckoned honest ministers by honest men?

From what has been said, we may venture to infer, that the Burghers shall have no more comfort in that oath than the men of Shechem had in Abimelech. I do not wish they may be devoured by it. Happy would it be were they brought to right exercise about it.

Allow that oath refers to our covenanted reformation. Allow it to be meant of our holy religion, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and church-government as set forth in our standards in the most zealous, faithful witnessing PROFESSION thereof: yet there are weighty objections against taking it.

For what end is this oath required and taken? Is it not to admit persons unto, and allow them in the use of their natural right? Is it not about enjoying what they have a right to AS MEN? The swearing this oath in the several clauses of it and the religious one among the rest, is, that they may be Merchants, Weavers, &c. They must make a faithfully witnessing profession of religion and solemnly swear it in order to enter a shop in the free use of it. Is not the exercise of our natural right hereby made to depend upon Christian qualifications? It is to no purpose to say, This is only the case as to certain Burghs. It will little avail a man who can have no benefit by his business in the country, or other towns where this oath is not required, that he is not there obliged to take this oath. — Moreover, if it is lawful so to regulate the shops of some Burghs, why do not do so with all the Burghs, Cities, Towns, and Villages in Scotland? Nay, why not require every Store-master, Farmer, Shepherd, Ploughman, &c. in the country to swear it also? If it be duty so to make the Weaver swear, it must be necessary to call the Ploughman to make oath in like manner before he be allowed to put his hand to a plough.

This oath makes the door of admission to a Tradesman's shop the same with that to the communion table. As to the former, faith in and obedience to Christ in a very extensive and solemn manner must be professed. What more can be required



quired with regard to the latter ? Has the minister a right to require more as to this table ; than the magistrate has as to a Taylor's shop ? surely the Burgher's must own that dominion is founded in grace, when they justify one's being required to swear in the above manner in order to be allowed to pursue his private worldly business !

But this is not all. By requiring such an oath about enjoying one's natural right, a foundation is laid for persecution. I do not mean that this is intended by the imposer, or is attended unto by the swearer.

But, I say, The thing itself contains a persecuting principle, and natively leads to a like cruel practice. According to this measure, if a man has not liberty in his own conscience for taking this oath, the consequence is, he must drop his business, and lose the use of his natural right. Is not this persecution. The Smith must be laid aside from his trade. The Wright, &c. &c. They are not allowed to work ; and by this means are effectually forbidden to eat. Persecuting measure ! There is a divine wo denounced against the city established by blood ; what must then be thought of the bloody principle.

Further, according to this way of going to work, no person may be allowed to pursue his business, unless he be fit to be admitted to swear this religion. If he is not qualified for swearing, certainly he should not be admitted to swear. Thus all who have not some competent degree of the knowledge of this religion must be refused liberty to follow their trades till they have acquired this knowledge. The absurdity hereof needs not be laid open.

Again, All these, who after swearing this oath, are found guilty of scandals, of impieties, of gross im-

immoralities, these I say ought to have their Shop-doors locked till they give satisfaction for their breaking that oath by which they hold their right to these shops. When the Merchant, the Tradesman has taken the name of God in vain; when he has got drunk, &c. &c. his Shop, I say, shou'd be shut up, until he has given satisfaction for his breaking his oath by these or other evils. This will be thought a strange consequence, but whoever examines the matter with judgment will find it native.

This kind of swearing condemns the typical Solomon in his building the temple; how can it answer unto the will of the antitypical Solomon, the glorious builder of the church? Solomon not only allowed persons to pursue their lawful business in Jerusalem without requiring them to swear to the true religion. But for building the temple he sent to Tyre for Tradesmen†. Yea, the man who did all the gold, silver, and brass work about the temple was a Tyrian. Solomon did not bring into Jerusalem this Tradesman where he was to have the City's business in his way, (most distinguished business,) by making him swear to the religion God had established in Canaan. I say, Solomon's conduct is condemned. For if this swearing is duty, his neglecting it was sin. In fine, This swearing tends greatly to promote ignorant, and so prophane swearing. The Burghers enveighing against those who are carrying on covenanting work, alledge many are admitted to join in that work who are not duly acquainted with what is sworn. Have they not more reason to enveigh against those who promote burgher-swearing? Is there not more

† 1 Kings v. 4. - 2 Chron. ii. 7.

ground to alledge many swear the burges oath who know as little about it as covenanters do about the bond? Is there less reason to dread the council house of ignorant swearing than the church. One would be ready to think that persons would run more upon an oath upon which their business depended, than upon one from which no worldly gain was to be expected. How ready are persons to swear for gain.

These are some of the objections which ly against the swearing the religious clause of some burges oaths, even supposing the clause in itself without fault. They do in my opinion, prove the Synod's sentence to be just. A sentence by which the swearing of that clause is condemned, and declared to be sinful.

The sentence being just; as to such of the Associate Body as opposed, censure was NECESSARY. The Burghers themselves confess so much. In the ninth reason of their protest against that sentence, they say, "But for the Synod to have passed a sentence—which necessarily obliges them according to the rules of discipline to censure their brethren." Thus they confess that the Synod was OBLIGED, NECESSARILY obliged, and that by the rules of discipline, to censure them.

Why should they after a confession cry out of being excommunicated? A confession made with all the solemnity of a protest. Did the thief complain of being crucified, who owned his sentence was just?—According to their own acknowledgment, the Synod would not have acted according to the rules of the church, had they not been censured. Yet now they loudly complain of the Sy-

\* See also their 5th Reason, and smol to nod



nod for censuring them. And herein they set forth excommunication, not in an awful and tremendous, but in a shocking and hateful light: telling the world, that the Synod has delivered them to Satan; artfully concealing the true scriptural account of that divine ordinance. Hereby they have caused the ordinance itself to be hated, instead of being revered.

However awful excommunication is, the Burghers confessed, nay, they protested that the Synod was absolutely shut up to it; being OBLIGED, NECESSARILY obliged, obliged by the rules of discipline so to censure them. If the Burghers mistook in so saying, their protest which they took against the sentence is built upon a mistake.

Here one may easily discover the unwarrantableness of their constitution. The very thing they stand upon in opposition to the Synod is, that the sentence they protested against shall not be a term of ministerial or Christian communion. Now in their protest they assert, they plead that that sentence obliges the Synod to censure. What is this but making it a term of communion? In their protest they say, IT MUST BE, In their constitution they say, IT SHALL NOT BE. Strange constitution! A church constitution settled upon OPPOSITION TO CHURCH ORDER.

It is a constitution contrary to their own protest, and their protest is as much against their own constitution as it is against the Synod's sentence. I say, the Burghers are standing under a protest against their own constitution. They have a protest, and instruments taken upon it, recorded in the register, BEARING,——What? bearing that the sentence of Synod concerning the religious clause of some burghers oaths, necessarily obliges the Synod

nod to censure those who swear that clause, or defend that swearing. Thus, I say, they protested in 1746. In their opposition to the Synod, in 1747. they declared, they affirmed—that that sentence of Synod shall *not be a term of ministerial, nor yet of Christian communion.* Upon this they stand in opposition to the Synod. This is their constitution. Now, I appeal it to the sensible and unprejudiced, if their protestation is not against their constitution. How can their protestation and constitution agree.

I would not be thought to charge them with the equal of Pilate's wickedness. But how much likeness is there in conduct? Pilate protested against his own sentence. The Burghers have a protest against their own constitution! No wonder though they strike out against the authority of the Synod; when they adhere to a protest against their own constitution. No wonder, these adhering to the testimony of Jesus deny their authority; when they themselves have protested against it. But there's one thing very strange among that society, The people in that party, own the constitution of that Synod; the ministers in it are standing under a protest against it! Mr. Brown in his said history of the Secession, tells us as to the Seceders, page 47. That “to have a minister without the established church, and a people within it, they could not comprehend.” Equally difficult will it be to comprehend a ministry protesting against a constitution, and a people approving it. Here the ministers are against the people; and the people against the ministers.

But this, however much, is not all. This minister among them is against another. And frequently he is against himself. Of this I shall give some

instances! I would not wish herein to expose them to derision. But as such confuting one another and themselves tends greatly to confirm the truth, it is lawful; it is necessary to take notice of it. I shall herein only mention two of them, who are probably reckoned principal writers on that side, viz. Messrs. Ralph Erskine and John Brown.

The deceased Mr. Erskine in his pamphlet entitled, *The lawfulness of the religious clause of some burghs oaths asserted*, page 3, 4. says, "It is to be lamented that ever this ground of perplexity (the swearing that clause) was given to the Lord's people by introducing this question into the judicatures, and much more by bringing it into the pulpit."

Every one must see Mr. Erskine opposing himself to the Assembly of the church of Scotland in their act, 28th July 1648, wherein they forbid the swearing an oath about religion, without the advice of the church. If the *religious* clause should not have entered either judicature or pulpit, the church should not have given advice about such swearing.

But who will reconcile this author with himself. He, in his publication called, *Fancy no Faith*, p. 34, 35. says, "It was the *duty* of ministers, when this debate came among them about the burghs oath, according to Jer. xv. 19. to take forth the precious from the vile.—They should take forth that precious clause of some old burghs oaths from among the number of vile oaths, and shew how it contains in it a solemn promise to maintain that precious, treasure, the true religion.—Their neglecting to do so, may well be thought to have provoked the Lord to leave them not to be his mouth."

Here



Here his self-contradiction is evident to all who understand what they read. How could ministers cease to be the Lords, by not pleading for that oath, if its entering judicatures or pulpits should be lamented? This author has in effect deposed a number of the Burgher ministers, however much he has complained of the Synod for deposing such formally. Mr. Brown tells us in his history, p. 68, That the Burghers admit cheerfully such to the ministry as *differ* from them in their faith about the oath. These if they have any spark of common honesty, will not recommend that oath. May it not well be thought that these are not the Lord's mouth, according to Mr. Erskine. This author here makes the burghers oath a term of ministerial communion. What does his saying, "Their (meaning the members of synod) neglecting to do so may well be thought, &c." Must we not think the same thing as to the same neglect by Burghers? and what is this less than making the maintaining and recommending that oath a term of ministerial communion. Mr. Brown's history says they do not in fact, make it such a term. But Mr. Erskine's *Fancy no Faith*, says that they should make it such in point of right.

According to our author, his *precious* clause is a *vile*, a *most* vile clause. It is a clause about religion. Yet he says in his lawfulness, &c. page 4. that the bringing that clause into judicatures, and pulpits, not only ought to be lamented; but also, that it "natively diverts (the Lord's people) from "spiritual exercise about things that belong to "them, to things which they cannot understand." Must not that be a vile clause about religion which should make us mourn when we hear of its entering the house of God.

Thus it seems to be much like the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel, standing in the temple. Must it not be a vile clause about religion, when the bringing it into a pulpit *natively* diverts the Lord's people from spiritual exercise about things belonging to them? If it is not vile it self, how comes it to have so very bad effects and to have them *natively*? If these are the effects, how bad is the cause?

If it turns the Lord's people away from things belonging to them; whoever swears it, *they* should not.

If it *natively* carries them into things they cannot understand, it certainly is what they cannot swear.

In same page, he says, "People might have been more suitably exercised, if they had never known, nor heard any thing about it."

What! is it hurtful to suitable exercise to know, to hear of that clause our author celebrates in his *Fancy &c.* as a *precious* clause, containing a *precious treasure*! Hurtful to such exercise to know or hear of what ministers under the pain of forfeiting their ministry are to recommend! Hurtful to such exercise to hear of what ministers are under such a necessity to speak of! Hurtful to hear what it is lawful to persons to swear! He also says, *Fancy no Faith*, page 35. "No man can lawfully swear either to his own, or any others profession." He grants in his lawfulness, *&c.* that by swearing his precious clause, "One obliges himself to maintain what is commendable in the nation relating to the true religion, namely, the *national profession thereof, and the national laws* authorising it."

Does not Mr. Erskine here assert the sinfulness of that oath he would defend. He has here justified

fed the sentence against which he protested in this respect, namely that he has declared the disputed clause *sinful*.

No man, says he, can *lawfully* swear to his own, or any *profession*: yet he confesses that the burghs oath binds the swearer to the *profession* which the *nation* makes; and also to the national *laws* authorising that profession. Here is an instance of the Burghers confuting one another and themselves, Mr. Erskine's confuting himself is here evident; And he likewise confutes the Burghers. Mr. Brown's history says, page 58. that the Burghers contend that "the human and faulty manner of professing it (the true religion) is not sworn to."

According to Mr. Erskine's account of that oath no man can know what to make of it. If the Burghers treat of it from the pulpit, as he has done from the press, people will not understand it, for it is not intelligible. At the same time when he would prove the lawfulness of that oath he evidently grants that *no man* whither Seceder or not, can lawfully swear it.

It is affecting to find one plunging so deep into the mire of inconsistency with and contradiction to himself who had deservedly been in such esteem in the church.

The other writer I mentioned is Mr. Brown. He is no less full of inconsistency with himself, and opposition to the Burghers in his fore said history, page 6. he says, "Our covenanting ancestors were convinced that it (public covenanting) was with apostolic approbation probably practised in the Macedonian church." Yet he boldly asserts page 68. that "it was not recommended as a then present duty by Christ or his apostles, during the more than forty years of their ministrations."

If



If neither Christ nor his apostles so recommended, how came the Macedonians to have the approbation he speaks of? The apostles were very much to blame if they approved a practice which Christ did not enjoin.

Page 7. He grants them seasons of covenanting which the scripture specifies for that work.—“ After signal deliverances;—amidst threatnings of  
“ fore trials and heavy judgments;—or when earnestly endeavouring to withstand or reform some  
“ signal corruptions.” But when giving their reasons why they have dropt that work they had begun, he says, page 68. “ Knowing that it is better  
“ not to vow than to do it ignorantly, or without  
“ paying of vows by a distinguished holy conversation.” Is not this equally a reason against that work *at any time*. According to this argument covenanting *never was, never will* be seasonable. But is not this reason as much against swearing the burghers oath *at this time* as the oath of our covenants?

His second reason is expressed thus, “ Fearing  
“ the present broken and divided state of the  
“ ly, and of so remarkable a restraint of spiritual  
“ influences may not altogether be so proper for  
“ it.” Are not the dividings among the Lord’s people, and the restraint of the spirit what threaten us with further judgments? Are not those very things, he mentions, threatening signs? Well, he grants, the Burghers grant, as above, a threatening time should be a covenanting time. Here Mr Brown, here the Burghers are guilty of self contradiction.

The third reason is given in these words, “ Finding, that besides some few inadvertent expressions, the Confession of Sins, published in 1744,  
“ and now used by their Anti burgher Brethren,  
“ is

" is such as they could not hope to make the twentieth part of their hearers understand ; and being  
 " exceedingly stumbled at the manner in which this  
 " work is managed by their brethren, they have  
 " hitherto been afraid to proceed therein."

One is scarcely able to believe this Burgher's history of the Burghers in what he here says. Can we suppose a society, wherein are men of sense, men of learning, capable of offering such an unreasonable reason. What is the amount of it? Just this, The work is not properly gone about by these called Anti-burghers, therefore it should not be put hand to by the Burghers. Will not that party own that preaching work is very improperly managed by many? Why not drop that also?

He says the Burghers are " exceedingly stumbled at the manner in which covenanting is managed by their brethren." If it be so, they have " reason also to be *exceedingly displeased with themselves*. Many of them covenanted in the very same manner at Stirling and elsewhere. This, if stumbling, was a public offence, and ought to have been publicly confessed, which none of them ever did. The most of these covenanters are now hid in their graves. According to this historian they died concealing that iniquity which they should have confessed. They joined in that work in the same manner for their own part, and in an act appointing the same work to be proceeded unto in the same manner in their several congregations. Yet they are exceedingly *stumbled, stumbled at*----What? their own example being followed, and their own act being obeyed! May we not say, They have stumbled and fallen?

The

'Tis often insisted upon, that many of the Burghers have gone off the stage with minds unshaken about the burghess oath; never signifying any change of mind about it. Mr. Brown lets us see that it is not easy, yea that it is not possible to know their private thoughts about public matters by their open and public declarations. For though stumbled, exceedingly stumbled at *their own* example being followed, and *their own* act being obeyed, yet they never acknowledged, publicly at least, the sin of that example, nor reversed that act. Mr. Brown indeed tells us p. 57. concerning that act relating to covenanting, that "not a few of the "seceding (surely he means burgher) ministers were "afterwards sensible of the *sinfulness* of that act." Not these ministers themselves, only Mr. Brown declares this before the world.

Some have been in hazard of suspecting that party of vile dissimulation. Here one of them represents not a few of their society to the world as abominable jugglers. They were sensible of the *sinfulness* of an act of *their own*: an act about a solemn part of the Lord's public worship and homage from the church. Yet they conceal'd that sense from the world, and from the church! This writer has made these, in some respect, blacker than Judas, who, upon conviction confessed.

Mr. Brown confutes the Burghers page 7. He owns it a fit season for covenanting when earnestly endeavouring a reformation. Now the Burghers have not for thirty years past found it reasonable to covenant. Therefore it seems, they were not in earnest in opposing the corruptions of our time. They do not want that the briars and thorns should be plucked up, however proper it may be some how to point them out.



It was already noticed, that this society has a very singular opposition made to its constitution, even its own protestation. And here it may be noticed, that there is an equally remarkable witness against their practice, wherein public covenanting is overlooked. That work all may know is dropt by them. This is testified against by a witnessing remnant of ministers and people: But a testimony from this quarter is contemned. There is another testimony against it, which one would think they could not treat with disdain; namely, a protest taken by the ministers of that society against the synod in 1746. In which they say, "We protest, that the Synod, or members thereof, who have joined in passing this oath, shall be chargeable with all the dismal consequences which have or may follow upon the bringing this question upon the field, and the pushing it to such a tyrannical decision; and further we PROTEST (note carefully,) that we shall NO ways be limited or restrained in our practice, by this decision of Synod, from proceeding to renew the bond in our respective congregations in agreeableness to the terms of Ministerial and Christian communion formerly stated; and this our DISSENT and PROTEST we give in, in our own name and in the name of all that shall adhere unto us) and thereupon we take instruments." Here they PROTEST that whatever shall be the consequences of the Synod's sentence, their being ANY WAY hindered in their practice, in public covenanting shall not be one of them. Mr Brown tells us that their being restrained herein (which is evident to all the world,) is owing to that decision. Has not the sword which they drew against the Synod, viz. their foresaid protest, entered into their

heart? It has entered their own constitution, and here it is found to strike through their own practice, Whoever compares in any judicious manner Mr Brown's account of the Burghers, with their own protest will see that he has set them up as the mark of their own shot. May they not say, according to this historian's account of them,—according to their notour practice, “We dissented  
 “from an act of the associate Synod concerning  
 “the swearing the religious clause of some burghs  
 “oaths to our own wounding; and protested a-  
 “gainst it to our own hurt.”

It might be further noticed here, as this protest has been mentioned, that they have not only fallen from their PROTESTED PRACTICE (according to their phraseology) but also from their PROTESTED PRINCIPLES. They protest that they will act “in agreeableness to the terms of ministerial and christian communion formerly stated;” that is, before the year 1746. Now was it not stated by the associate body before that time, namely, in the year 1744. That the RENOVATION of the national covenant of Scotland and the solemn league and covenant of the three nations in the MANNER now agreed upon and proposed by the presbytery shall be the TERM OF MINISTERIAL COMMUNION with this presbytery; and likewise of CHRISTIAN COMMUNION in the admission of people to sealing ordinances, secluding therefrom all *Opposers, Contemners, and Slighters* of the said renovation of our covenants?

Is there any such term of communion either ministerial or christian among the Burghers? Our historian tells us, p. 68, 69. that they have found that they could scarce hope to make the twentieth part of their people understand that covenanting.

In

In this case it would be most absurd to make it a term of Christian communion.

The Burghers protesting against the Synod's sentence is very like Jacob's sons their selling Joseph. They intended it for his ruin, but it proved a step to his advancement. The foresaid protest was designed for the overthrow of that sentence: but how much does it confirm it. That sentence affirms the swearing the foresaid clause to be what did not agree to, and consist with an entering into the bond for renewing our solemn covenants. It affirmed that these two oaths *could not* go together.

The Burghers said with a PROTEST, that they *should* go together. But in spite of their protest these oaths have parted company. Cleaving to the burghers oath, they were obliged to let go the oath of our covenants.

Page 57, 58, giving an account of his party's arguments in favour of swearing foresaid clause, he mentions in the first place, " Their contending " that it was the true, the divine religion, professed and authorized in Scotland, itself, and " not the human and faulty manner of professing " and settling it, that was sworn." This it would seem, is their main argument. It will afterwards appear whether it be a strong one also. The proof of what they here assert, Mr Brown gives us in these words, " The words of the oath not being, " as presently professed and authorized, but words " of a very different import." Here is their great strength: the fate of their cause turns upon this. Let it be examined with care. They lean to this, " The words of the oath are not,—as presently professed and authorized;" the little word *as* is wanting in the oath. I cannot help thinking this



will prove just such a staff to the Burghers as Egypt was to the Jews\*, "A staff of reed." It is all one whether the word *as* be in, or out of the clause. The swearer is as much engaged to this human and faulty manner of professing and settling religion wanting *as* in his oath *as* having it.—— Presently professed, is of the same breadth and length with—*As* presently professed. For proof of this, allow me to ask, are not these words, Religion presently professed, of the very same meaning with these, Religion *which* is presently professed? If any say, they are not, that person cannot be reasoned with. Religion presently professed is the very same with religion *which* is presently professed. But religion *which* is presently professed is the very same with, Religion *as* presently professed. Mr Brown himself owns this, P. 19, speaking of these ministers and christians who scrupled to swear the abjuration-oath, and at joining in church communion with these who took it, whom he also allows to have been judicious and godly; he tells us that these ministers and christians hold, that in said oath the swearer engages, "That he will to the uttermost of his power maintain the limitation and succession of the British Crown *as* it is, or *which* stands limited by an English act." Therefore they would not swear it, nor *join in church-fellowship* with these who took it.

They made it a term of church communion. They reckoned a swearing to the succession of the British crown which stands limited,—and a swearing thereunto *as* it stands limited by fore-said act to be swearing of the same import. By a parity

of reason, will not swearing to the religion *WHICH* is, and, *as* presently professed be the very same?

It may be said, Mr. Brown indeed owns that these ministers and Christians so viewed *which* and *as* in that oath. But does he approve their view? Hear himself, page 20. "To these reasons (says he, of "which that now named is one) a variety of answers were published, but destitute of that candour, or clearness necessary to satisfy a duly tender and well informed conscience, in the awful "and solemn point of an oath."

Our historian, then, with these ministers and Christians, makes it all one as to the British Crown, in the abjuration-oath, whether it was said *as* it stands, or *which* stands limited.

And must it not be all one, whether it be religion *which* is presently professed, or—as presently professed, in the burghers oath? Here then Mr. Brown contradicts the Burghers. Though they lean upon the want of *as* in the clause, he dares not. The judicious and godly ministers he speaks and approves of, would not venture upon the abjuration oath when it had not *as*, more than when it had it. So, I say, Mr. Brown dares not lean upon the want of *as* in the burghers oath, though it be the great support of his brethren; and so much the more wise is he. If any ask, What then does he lean to as a proof of its not being the profession made of religion by the nation which that oath binds unto? I cannot tell. Nay, he has through the sides of the abjuration oath struck a heavy blow at the burghers oath. According to himself this oath binds equally to the human *faulty* manner of professing religion, as if the words had been, *religion as* presently professed. By this one is put in mind of Ahab condemning himself in the sentence

sentence he passed against the prophet.† Compare what he says about the abjuration oath, page 19, 20. with what he says about the burghs oath, page 57, 58. The want of *as* in the former could not satisfy a duly tender and well informed conscience, says he; and will the want of it in the latter do it? Are duly tender and well informed consciences more easily satisfied about the burghs oath, than the abjuration oath? What a pity, that there are so many untender and ill informed consciences, as appears from the numbers who are satisfied; and Mr. Brown tells us that these numbers are increasing in the East, and he might have said, in the West of Scotland also.

Page 55. He says, "Through *mistake and pre-judice*, their defences (speaking of the two parties "after the breach) seem, at least to themselves, not "inconsiderable." What! is the solemn act of swearing not considerable save through mistake? Does he not say, that an oath is a solemn and awful point. *Awful and solemn* are words, though of great sound, yet of very little meaning, if swearing is not either *solemn worship*, or *awful wickedness*.

No wonder, Mr. Brown neglect covenanting among his people, and for his part, when he accounts *swearing* inconsiderable.

But how melancholy to find a professed minister; yea, and a teacher of students telling in effect. "That a number of ministers once united in a "church-communion, are now divided. The one "party defends the swearing a solemn oath in several burghs; the other condemns it. Solemn "swearing is the matter of difference. No matter "whether that swearing be condemned or defend-

† 1 Kings xx, 40.



"ed. No matter whether it be right or wrong." This is the plain meaning of his language. Many have lamented the people of that society making it, and the prophane world making it, a small matter: but what grief of heart should it cause, that this Gentleman should vent openly such very *blasphemous stuff*!

What lectures must he have to his people, to his students upon the third commandment! Page 67, he says, "The Burghers believe the constitution of the revolution church *not* to be *Erastian*." But though the Burghers believe so, Mr. Brown does not. He believes that constitution is *Erastian*. He tells us, page 12. That the Assembly in 1690, acquiesced in the Parliament's Settlement of religion without *any* complaint. Now let it be considered, that in this Settlement it is expressly declared, "That the 114th act, James the VI. parliament 12th, anno 1592 is revived in the *whole* heads thereof, save that relating to patronage."—In which act, the king has secured him the power of appointing the *time and place* of the church holding her assemblies. Thus it is with the settlement the church so *fully* acquiesced in. If any say, Is that settlement *Erastian*? The Burghers Doctor of divinity says, *yes*, it is *Erastian*. For proof of this, read page 76. where he tells us that King William's calling the Assembly to dissolve, was an *Erastian* requirement. But how could it be *Erastian* in his Majesty to dissolve these assemblies, if his having the power of *appointing the time* of the church holding her assemblies is not *Erastian*? Does not Mr. Brown teach by his language now quoted, that the constitution of the revolution church is *Erastian* though his Burgher Brethren do not believe him.

Are

Are not the Burgher ministers, as was alledged, against one another ; and also the same minister against himself ? What a dismal scene of confusion and self-contradiction does their writings and pleadings contain ! We are told of every man's hand against Ishmael ; but we hear not of his own hand being engaged in the opposition also. The builders of Babel not understanding one another was a token and effect of the Lord's displeasure with the building. The defenders of the burghers oath understand not, and so confound one another ; yea, and the same writer often contradicts himself. What meaneth such confusion and self-contradiction ? Does it not look equally gloomy in new testament days, as in these soon after the flood ?

It is particularly lamentable that people will not see the very great sin of that party even when it is told them by these who are leading persons in it : Mr. Brown says, page 58. The Burghers grant that " they had stated a quarrel with the manner " in which the true religion is presently professed " and authorised." And they, he says, " Generally think their religion is—the same with that of " their brethren in the church ; but they esteem " their own manner of profession and adherence " to it, to be more strict, and to think they ought " to have the countenance of the civil rulers rather " than such."

In this language he affirms the Burghers profession to be so much better than that of the national church, that she ought to be turned out of the civil establishment, and the Burghers put into it. Why should a Burgher swear to a worse profession than his own ? Why should the Burghers promote a swearing to the profession of the established

blished church, if that church should be stript of that establishment and the Burghers succeed to it? Why state a quarrel with it, and solemnly engage to it? When the iniquity of this society is pointed out to people by themselves, yet they will not see. It is to no purpose to say, It is not the profession made by the national church, but the religion professed by her, which is sworn in the burges's oath. The contrary of this has been proven above.

Here one may see the very dreadful apostacy of that society. They have given up with the covenanted reformation which these lands were brought to; and by so doing they have fallen from and are treading under foot the *whole* testimony emitted by the Associate Presbytery. The first part of the charge is already proven. The other part of the charge follows of course if we believe what is said in the conclusion of that testimony where it is said, The Presbytery's *design in the whole* is to bear testimony to the truths of God opposed in the present age; — And also to bear testimony to Scotland's *covenanted reformation*.

If this was the design of the *whole*; surely they may well be said to have deserted that *whole* testimony, who have given up with that reformation-work. They have complained of being charged with so doing. But here they are charged also with giving up with the *whole* reformation attained betwixt the years 1638, and 1649.

Though there is little prospect, from the disposition of these who have drunk down the Burgher cup, of recovering them out of that snare, there may be advantage reaped by what is here noticed. Through the divine blessing it may be a mean of warning these who are not yet taken in that snare; and of confirming the friends of the cause of Christ



in their profession. Though the recovering of these who have erred (which should be earnestly prayed for,) take not place; it will be glorifying to God and rejoicing to the writer, if it shall prove useful for warning the generation, and establishing professors in a contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, even though obliged therein to contend against Burghers as well as others. But however it may fare with this performance, the cause it appears for will be pled, to the awful conviction of its opposers, and to the rejoicing comfort of all its genuine friends. Micah. vii. 8, 9, 10, 11.

The Synod has always had a strong opposition to fight against in pleading the cause of truth. And it has been no less singular than strong as to the matter of the religious clause of some burgeses oaths. Many who have no quarrel with the Synod for condemning the swearing that clause; nay, condemn it also, yet oppose the Synod with all their might, because the swearer or defender of that swearing is found fault with by the Synod also. Their complaint is not, *such an oath is condemned*; but, *such persons are censured*! The excommunication of some of the Burgher party is the great, and with many, the only ground of their opposition. 'Tis not the first time that persons have raged because of discipline being exercised. Israel murmured bitterly against Moses and Aaron, raged furiously against them, when discipline was inflicted in a very solemn manner upon Korah and his company. This discipline was inflicted in a manner which one would think might have prevented a mouth from being opened against it. Yet it is said, "All the congregation of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron saying, Ye have killed  
" the

"the people of the Lord."† Likewise when Christ purged the temple of corrupters, The scribes and pharisees sought to slay him.†

A consideration of the divine ordinance of excommunication at large is not here proposed. Only an examination of the objections brought against the Synod's inflicting that censure upon some of the Burgher party is intended.

OBJEC. 1. The burghers oath is a trivial matter. Many are little concerned in it, or know nothing about it: it is an indifferent matter. Why then go so far about such a matter as to inflict the highest censure of the church?

ANSW. In the foregoing pages it has been proven to be a matter of great weight, and to draw deep. The Burghers indeed hold it to be a matter indifferent. They have protested that it is so. Accordingly in their protest, against the Synod's decision in 1746 they say, They proposed to advise their people not to swear that oath. By this it is evident that they view it not as a moral duty, otherwise they might not discourage the practice of it. But what then? supposing it was a matter really indifferent, yet it will be easy to prove that it laid a foundation for censure. I say, allow it to be a matter indifferent to swear that oath; yet the scriptures of truth, the law of Christ Jesus our Lord requires the swearer or defender of that to be excommunicated.

The church of Pergamus was found fault with by our Lord Christ, for having these in her communion, who taught the eating things sacrificed unto idols. "I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that taught the chil-

† Numb. xvi. 41.

† Mark xi. 17, 18.

"dren of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols.  
 "Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly."†  
 This eating was in itself really indifferent.† It was  
 also, being offensive to many professors of religion,  
 forbidden by an Act of Synod.\* Well, Christ has  
 a quarrel with this church, because she had such  
 in her communion. He calls her to repent. What  
 did all this mean? Did it not say, that she was to  
 rid herself of these? that she should cast them out,  
 that is excommunicate them?

Just so here, the foresaid swearing is supposed to  
 be a thing indifferent, and it really is offensive, and  
 has been condemned by an Act of Synod. Thus  
 the cases are similar. Now surely Christ will have  
 the like say in the like case. Had the Synod not  
 cast out these swearers or defenders of that swearing,  
 it had been a matter of Christ's quarrel with them.  
 His language would have been, I have somewhat a-  
 gainst thee because thou hast these persons in com-  
 munion with thee. Repent; or else I will come to  
 thee quickly. Thus one may see that the objection  
 is of no force.

OBJEC. 2. These excommunicated were good  
 men and great ministers; who had been highly e-  
 steemed in the church. How daring to censure  
 them in such a manner!

ANSW. The apostle Paul says, "Though *we*, or  
 "an *angel* from *heaven* preach any other gospel—  
 "let *him* be *accursed*:" an *apostle*, or even an *angel*  
 from *heaven*. Had any of the apostles been found  
 obstinate offenders they would have merited the  
 highest censure of the church. Accordingly we  
 find Paul zealously withstanding Peter, and faith-

† Rev. ii. 14, 15. † 1 Cor. viii. 8. \* Act xv. 28, 29.  
 fully



fully rebuking him.† He withstood him to the face and addressed him "before all," that is, he rebuked him publicly. Here one apostle rebuked another. Paul knew Peter to be a good man, and to have been an eminently successful minister. Thousands had been benefited by his ministry. Paul knew that he was delivered from the curse of the covenant of works, but at the same time considered him as subject to the discipline of the covenant of grace. Did Peter's holiness suffer, or was his ministerial usefulness any way reflected upon by Paul censuring him when he offended?

True it is, Paul did not excommunicate his brother. But whence was it, Peter was not so censured? Why, Peter submitted to the rebuke. Had he not done so, Paul behoved to have excommunicated him, otherwise his conduct would not have agreed to Christ's rule, "If he neglect to hear—let him be to thee as a heathen man."§ This is the express order of the great King with respect to such as will not hear.

Thus we see that the censures of the church belong to good and great men when they offend; that it is no presumption to apply discipline to them, and that it is particularly awful to exalt any of the members of the church when they offend above the discipline of her exalted head.

OBJEC. 3. None of these who were excommunicated have been thereby reclaimed, though it is a number of years since they were laid under that censure, and the most of them are in their graves. How sure a sign of that censure not being approved of God?

† Gal. ii. 11, 12, 13, 14.

§ Matth. xviii. 16, 17.

ANSW.

ANSW. If the justness of censure is to be judged of by its success in reclaiming the offender, we may, we must find fault with the far greater part of all the instances of it in the church of Christ. The recovery of these who have erred concerning the faith is what very seldom takes place. The church has no reason to look for this as what shall be frequent. It is spoken of with a *peradventure*. "If God *peradventure* will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." † From the beginning till now, we will meet with very few instances of persons being reclaimed by censure from erroneous principles. There are many more instances of persons being reformed hereby as to wicked practices. It deserves to be particularly noticed, when the erroneous are reclaimed, but their remaining obstinate is no way to be wondred at.

Even Solomon, to whom the Lord had particularly manifested himself, remained awfully obstinate in his idolatry, after he had been in a very remarkable manner reprov'd, see his rebuke, in 1 Kings xi. 9, &c. Yet after all this, see how he was disposed about the matter, verse 40. "Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam." Had he been brought to any proper exercise about his sin and offence, he had not sought to deal with Jeroboam in any such manner. Here we have his contumacy marked out in most legible characters. With this is the history of this offender concluded: I say with this, Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam.

When he was censured by God, he seeks to kill him whom God had appointed to rule over the ten tribes. The Lord by the prophet said to Jeroboam,

† 2 Tim. iii. 25.

"I will

"I will rend the kingdom from Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee."

This very person Solomon seeks to kill : and thus his history ends. There is no express mention made in scripture of his being recovered from his erroneous principles by the censure inflicted upon him. If he did come to a particular public acknowledgment of his sin and offence, the scripture draws a veil over it ; so that it is to us, as if it had not taken place. Moreover,

We are told only of two men excommunicated by Paul, viz. Alexander and Hymeneus, 1 Tim. ii. 20. As to us both of them died in their offence, and under the censure. The last account we have of them, bears that they were still standing out against all the means used for reclaiming them. See 2 Tim. ii. 17. and iv. 14. These were the only persons our Bible says Paul excommunicated : and as to neither the one nor the other, does it say, that the censure was successful in the way of reclaiming.

Observe it, The Spirit of God tells us of some being excommunicated by Paul, but speaks not a word of any of these being thereby recovered out of the snare wherein they had been taken. May we therefore conclude, that the sentence was not approved by God ? Why should it be thought strange, that even the Lord's people should refuse to submit to the discipline of the word, when there is to be found of them who reject doctrines of it ? Their contemning the discipline of the church is as conceivable, as that of opposing her doctrine.

Some think good men will certainly retract that for which they are justly excommunicated ; because they would be shut out of heaven, if they did not. Here the gross mistake of many about excommunication comes forth. They look upon it to be an



excluding persons out of heaven, and a shutting the door of that glorious communion with God against them. But how great a mistake is this! If excommunication did shut the door of heaven upon the censured, while under censure, that he could not enter heaven if dying in that state, it would also shut the door of spiritual communion in living; and so this ordinance would be an effectual bar in the way of salvation, instead of being an instituted mean of it, as to obstinate offenders. It may be confidently affirmed, that excommunication does not meddle with the door of the heavenly state, in the way of shutting it against any. The very great out cry which is made about that ordinance, proceeds from an utter mistaking of it. And that mistake arises from a gross mistaking the meaning of that text, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven." Math. xviii. 18. Many think the meaning hereof is, That these who are excommunicated regularly by the visible church, have the door of heaven shut against them, so that they shall not enter. According to this explication of this passage, what must be the meaning of the words which immediately follow, namely, "And whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven?" The sense certainly must be, whomsoever ye shall absolve from the censures of the church, these shall have the door of heaven opened to them, that they shall enter thereby. According to this notion, we behoved to reckon all insured in salvation, who are regularly absolved from censure.

The binding in heaven spoken of by Christ, is only to be meant of God, who is in heaven approving what is done regularly by his church on earth. But what is it that is done by the church on earth  
in

in excommunicating the obstinate offender? Why the offender is cast out of the *communion* of the church visible. This is bound by God in heaven; but this is a quite different matter from that of excluding persons out of heaven.

OBJEC. 4. It would have been more for the interest of religion, not to have gone so far in discipline. Why then ought it to have been carried to such a great height?

ANSW True it is, that it is very hard work to reconcile many to the Synod's going so far in this matter. But had the Synod not gone the length they went, it would have been more difficult to have reconciled their conduct to the word of God. It is melancholy, that persons should think and say, that the exercising the discipline of the church, is, or can be hurtful to her interest. Is not excommunication appointed by Christ for obstinate offenders? Did not Christ appoint it? Is it not a part of his yoke? Can any have reason, or face to say to his office-bearers, make his yoke lighter, and we will follow you? It is awfully daring to insinuate that it is hurtful to the interest of the church, to exercise the discipline Christ has prescribed unto her. Has not the Holy Ghost told us that excommunication is appointed for the benefit of the offender, not for his hurt.† “Deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, *that the Spirit may be saved.*”—Excommunication is an instituted mean of saving obstinate offenders, as really as the preaching the gospel is a mean of converting sinners. Now, it being appointed by Christ, and being a mean of this sort, and an ordinance for this end among others,

† 1 Cor. x. 25.

how could the Synod have acted conformably to the law of Christ; how would it have consisted with a brotherly love to the offenders still remaining obstinate, had it left off dealing with them while this mean remained. No doubt, different applications were made for Hezekiah's recovery before that of the figs was proposed by Isaiah. But would it have consisted either with any proper love to the sick, or respect to the Prophet's prescription, not to have used that remedy when prescribed? Would it express any proper respect to the authority of our Lord Christ, or love to obstinate offenders (which the burghers were) not to use the remedy of divine appointment for the recovery of such?

We find the neglect of discipline to have had very dismal effects. Saul was neglected by the Lord upon account of his neglecting civil discipline. This first emptied the throne of Israel. The failing as to a due exercise of ecclesiastic discipline transferred the priesthood from Eli's family to another. Eli began to reprove his sons for their offence, but he carried not his censure a due length, see 1 Sam. chap. iii. 3.

We have different instances in scripture, of churches being reprov'd for not going a greater length in discipline.

But none can produce one instance in the whole Bible, of a church being found fault with for going too far in discipline towards obstinate offenders. And this needs not be wondered at, for this good reason, namely, It is as impossible to inflict too high a church censure upon obstinate offenders, as it is to preach too much Bible doctrine to gospel hearers. I say the one is as impossible as the other. Hence the Synod being blamed for going too far



in the matter, is charged with an impossibility, according to Christ's rule as to church censure. I cannot see how a church can inflict a lower censure upon an offender, and finally rest the process there, the offender remaining obstinate. All due moderation is to be used in the process, but how it should be finally rested there I see not. Consider the glorious, the divine rule. If he neglect to hear—let him be to thee as a heathen man.

But not to insist upon this, let it be remembered that the exercise of discipline is not left to the option of the church. She is under no less a solemn charge with regard to the inflicting discipline upon offenders than she is with regard to the preaching of the gospel. I say she is no less solemnly charged with respect to the former than she is with respect to the latter. "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another doing nothing by partiality †."

This is a charge concerning discipline; and can there one be more solemn? The Synod has been very loudly complained of by the generation for exercising it, but at the same time it was under a solemn charge not to neglect it. How happily then was the Synod directed when they listened to the Lord's solemn charge however much they may have to bear of the world's bitter reflection. It is much more eligible to be branded by the world with the name of fiery bigotted bloody zealots, than to have from Christ the awful character of wicked and slothful servants. This was the

designation of him who hid his Lord's talents in the earth. And what must Christ's character be of that church which hides his gracious ordinance of excommunication when offenders are remaining obstinate after all other means have been used?

After all that has been said, some may insist that the interests of religion have been hurt by the above-censure, as persons cannot be admitted to communion with the associate body unless they approve of the excommunication of the burgher party. How many are they who cannot approve of that heavy censure? This is a term of communion many cannot agree to.

Such a term of communion was never proposed by the associate body unto any so far as I know. It was never required of any unto their having communion whether ministerial or christian, that they should approve of that censure. A positive approbation of the several steps of discipline which the church has been called to take with offenders was never made a term of church communion in the church of Christ so far as I have heard. Yea, it would be most absurd to lay down any such measure. Persons may be qualified for receiving the seals of the new covenant though not able to judge what are the steps which the judicatures of the Lord's house should take with offenders. Therefore let all know that there is no such bar in their way as that of approving the forelaid exercise of discipline in having church communion with the associate body.



T H E E N D.

E R R A T U M.

Page 9. line 27. after *to read* swear *to*.